

A New Era In Growth
Management:

The Tier System

A Layman's Guide To Commercial Development in Monroe County



Monroe County Growth
Management
Division
Version 1

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Welcome to Monroe
County

Monroe County welcomes you to its beautiful island chain at the southern tip of Florida. This brochure is a brief guide to commercial development in Monroe County.

Commercial development impacts the environment in many of the same ways as residential development. The obvious loss of habitat associated with development decreases the land area available to a protected species for survival. The secondary impacts are also present, such as additional traffic passing through habitat areas and light and sound disturbances.

Another limiting factor for commercial development is demand. The limited amount of residential development allowed each year creates little demand for additional commercial centers.

In 1993, giving consideration to these limiting factors, Monroe County drafted the 2010 Comprehensive Plan with a link between commercial and residential development. This link established a rate of growth for commercial development that corresponded to the absolute rate of residential development for that year.

However, the Comprehensive Plan was not implemented until 1996. In that time period the amount of commercial develop-

ment exceeded that which was allowed by the Comprehensive Plan. In an effort to correct this imbalance and reduce the number of empty buildings throughout the Keys a growth control mechanism was created.

The Non-Residential Rate of Growth Ordinance (NROGO) was established to control the rate of commercial growth. Approved in 2002 NROGO is considerably younger than ROGO, and yet many of the same problems with ROGO exist with NROGO.

The Tier system adopted in 2006 is designed with correction of these issues in mind. ROGO and NROGO are effective at slowing growth but not at managing it. The Tier system designates certain areas appropriate for development and other areas for conservation based on environmental sensitivity.

Utilizing this system, we can direct commercial development to areas where it will have the least impact on the environment and conversely be closer to residentially developed areas.

The following brochure provides a brief introduction to the process for commercial development in Monroe County.

Commercial Development Process

The first step in building a commercial development is to know what type of use will occupy that space. Use is broken into categories such as industrial, retail, and office. The use of a structure determines what type of review is required and what type of process must be undergone to receive approval.

As of right development is development that is expressly approved in a zoning or land use district. This type of development requires the least intense type of review prior to approval.

A minor conditional use is the next level of review and is reserved for projects whose specifications fall just outside those expressly allowed within the zoning or land use district.

A major conditional use is a process utilized to approve a project which contains elements that require public input prior to approval.

The Monroe County Planning staff are available to help you determine what type of use your project includes. If you are proposing a project which may need guidance through the approval process such as a minor or a major conditional use, a pre-application conference may be required. This is a meeting with planning department staff to review with you the process of approval for your project.

After a pre-application conference is held you must apply for a conditional use and a hearing for the Development Review Committee will be scheduled. This is a committee of staff which reviews projects for approval in the case of minor conditional uses or transmission to the Planning Commission in the case of a major conditional use.

The flow chart to the right will help you to visualize the process for commercial development approval, (1) represents the starting point for as of right projects, (2) and (3) represent the paths for minor and major conditional uses.

NROGO Process

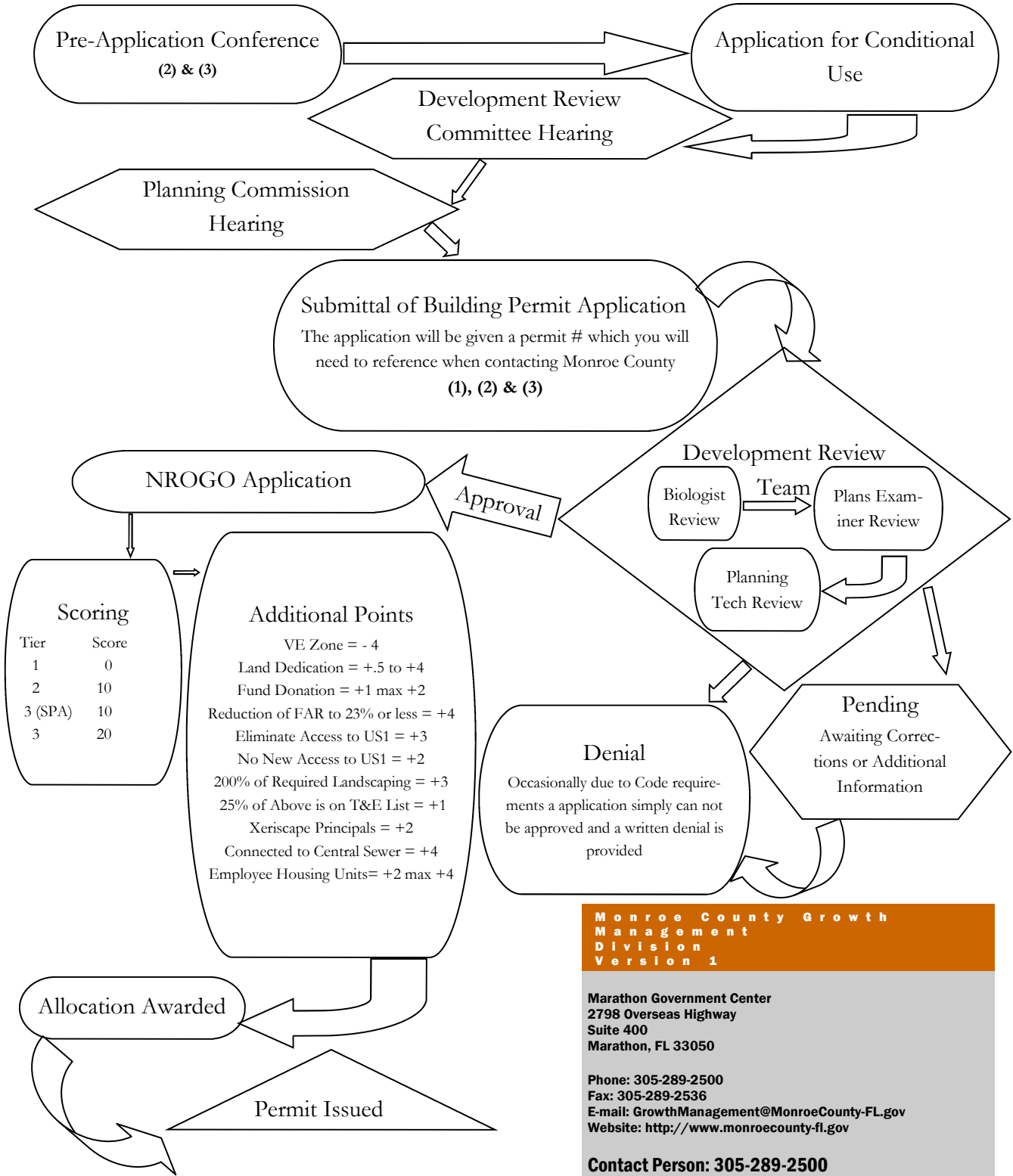
Any person wishing to develop land in Monroe County is required to apply for a building permit. If that development includes commercial square footage an NROGO application will also be required.

After receiving approval from the required Committee and Commissions you may apply for a building permit in any of the Monroe County Building Department Offices. This application will be circulated to the Development Review Team (DRT) where it will be reviewed for compliance with Monroe County Code.

After approval from the DRT you will be able to apply for an NROGO allocation for the required square footage. NROGO allocations are limited to 2500 square feet per allocation period per project. You may apply successively for additional square footage with a 10,000 square feet cap.

The NROGO application will compete against other NROGO applicants for the available square footage in that allocation period. This competition is based on scoring criteria like Tier designation of the property to be developed. An additional penalty is assigned if the project is located in a V flood zone. Additional points are available as an incentive such as including in your project employee housing units, reduction of the floor area ratio (FAR) to 23% or less, elimination of an access to US1, no new access to US1, planting 200% of the required landscaping, 25% of the previous 200% is listed as either threatened or endangered, or xeriscape principals which include planting 100% native plants and directing rainwater to planting areas. Other incentive points are available which are similar to ROGO such as fund donation and land dedication.

Based on the total score of the NROGO application and the date the NROGO application was submitted, it is ranked and allocations are awarded biannually. The highest ranking applications receive an allocation for square footage and may then have the associated building permit issued.



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